THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir. C and AG observed that the cost of procurement of Laser Guidance Kits in 1999 was higher as compared to figures arrived at by escalating the last purchase price using normal escalation factors.

(b) A contract was concluded with a foreign vendor in August, 1999 for supply of Laser Guidance Kits (LGK) to fill up War Wastage Reserve (WWR) deficiencies as per approved scales and the prescribed procedure. The cost was higher because the proposal entailed supply of additional items, which were not separately priced in the contract, as well as a faster delivery schedule, etc.

(c) Question does not arise in view of (b) above.

(d) These LG kits were procured for General Purpose 1000 lbs Bombs. However, since these kits can be fitted to PB-500 Deep Penetration Bombs also, it was subsequently decided to procure these Deep Penetration Bombs too. Since bombs complementary to the LGKs were always available, question of reduction of shelf life to these kits due to mismatch with bombs does not arise.

(e) The urgency of procurement of LGK was based on the requirement to fill up the then existing deficiency in the War Wastage Reserve. Appropriate action has been taken on the report and comments have been sent to the Office of Principal Director of Audit Defence Services (Air Force and Navy).

Utilising private airlines for ferrying troops and materials

1569. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Jet Airlines has been chartered by the Army to ferry troops and materials from sensitive locations in Ladakh;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to utilise the services of private airlines for similar situation in difficult terrains; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Defence has not chartered Jet Airlines to ferry Army troops from locations in Ladakh. However, pursuant to a trial flight to Thoise in Ladakh on 30-7-2003 by Jet Airways, discussions between officials of Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Defence are in progress.

(c) and (d) No such proposal is with the Government.

Enhancing the fire power of infantry units

1570. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of steps taken specially in enhancing the fire-power, reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities of all Infantry Units in India;

(b) whether our Army Infantry Units specially on our Borders are equipped with human and arms detecting sensors, battlefield surveillance radars, hand held thermals, various types of rocket launchers and automatic grenade launchers etc.;

(c) if so, details of those items which are imported from foreign countries and names of such foreign countries;

(d) if so, whether Government has made any effort to manufacture those items in our country; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (e) Modernisation of Infantry has been accorded the highest priority in the current Army Plan. The Army Infantry units on borders have been equipped with modern and effective fire power systems like 84mm Rocket Launcher MK-III; Automatic Grenade Launcher AGS-30; Multi Grenade Launcher (MGL); Anti Material Rifle (AMR) and Flame Thrower RPO-A (FT). The reconnaissance and surveillance equipment include state of the art. equipment like Hand Held Thermal Imagers, Battle Field Surveillance Radar (Short Range) *i.e.* BFSR (SR); High Resolution Binoculars and Unattended Ground Sensors. All these items have been imported from various foreign countries like Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Israel, France, Germany and USA. The equipment is procured only after